

asked the chief priests where the Christ was to be born. The quoted Micah 5:2 – in Bethlehem. After finding and worshipping Christ, the wise men, directed by God, returned home another way. Then God told Joseph through an angel to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt (v.13)

a. He obediently went to Egypt.

- 1) Joseph obeyed God's directions (v.14).
 - a) What if Joseph had hesitated, questioned God, or decided to trust his feelings rather than God?
 - b) Trusting your feelings instead of trusting the Bible could lead to eternal doom. (Proverbs 16:25) "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*"
 - c) Sadly, that is what many Christians do as well. They are not convinced that God's Word is true so they trust their feelings instead of the Bible. (Proverbs 13:13) "*Whoso despiseth the word* ^[think it insignificant] *shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.*"
- 2) He stayed there until the death of Herod. Jesus was born in about 5 BC and Herod died in 4 BC.

b. He obediently returned to Nazareth.

- 1) Joseph remained obediently in Egypt until God sent another angel who told him to return to Israel (v.19-20)
- 2) Again, he arose and obeyed God's word (v.21)
- 3) God spoke to him again in another dream (v.22).
- 4) This too he obeyed (v.23).

Conclusion: Joseph was disbelieving, yet he allowed God's Word to change his heart. He then devoted himself to follow God's plans. He became dutiful in obeying God's Word. Are you obeying God's Word or your feelings? Your feelings are changeable and unstable. God's Word is absolute and unchanging.

God is not a man that he should lie (Num 23:19). God sent His Son to earth to die in your place. Have you trusted him to save you from hell? Christian, are you trusting God with your problems?

Song: Only Trust Him - 252

The Incarnation

from Joseph's standpoint

15 December 2019 AM - Matthew 1:18-25 - Incarnation - Scott Childs

Introduction: Joseph and Mary were both of royal lineage. In addition, Mary was also related to the priesthood, as her Uncle Zacharias was a priest. Though Joseph was a carpenter, both he and Mary were extremely poor. Their betrothal (or engagement) was Joseph's vow, in the presence of witnesses, a payment of a dowry and a closing prayer. From that moment, Mary was the betrothed wife of Joseph; their relationship as sacred, as if they had already been married, yet they must keep themselves pure and not come together until their wedding day. Nothing but a formal divorce could break this betrothal covenant.

The young couple perhaps had dreams of their wedding day, yet months in the future, and of living happily together there in Nazareth.

Without question, the announcement of the incarnation of Christ [When God became man] totally changed Joseph's life.

Transition: This morning, we are going to note **three of Joseph's responses** to the incarnation of Christ. As we do, I will point out several principles that we ought to apply to our own lives.

His first response to the incarnation of Christ was ...

1. Joseph was Disbelieving (v.18-19)

a. Mary's news was incredible.

- 1) Shortly after the angel told Mary of her supernatural conception, she went to visit her Aunt Elizabeth down in Judea. When she returned after three months, Joseph learned of her conception.
 - a) The Bible does not tell us whether Mary told Joseph or if her father told him.
 - b) With the seriousness of this situation, we assume that Joseph was told of the angel's words to Mary.
- 2) All this was too incredible for Joseph. How could he believe such a story? Conceiving a child without a human father was absolutely impossible.
- 3) His hopes and dreams appeared to be shattered. How could his godly fiancée betray him so? He just could not

believe that she had conceived miraculously.

✞ *The problem with Joseph's reasoning was that he was leaving God out of the equation. Without God, Mary's story **WAS** incredible. However, God is not limited to the laws of nature. This is true about every supernatural event described in the Bible. We cannot even explain the existence of life; therefore, we must not reject the Bible just because we cannot explain supernatural events in the Bible.*

b. In love, Joseph planned a private divorce.

- 1) Joseph was devastated. He had but two courses of action he could take. He could make a public example of Mary and have her stoned to death (Deut. 22:13-21). Alternatively, he could privately divorce her.
 - a) The book of Matthew was written to the Jews. It is the only book containing the "*except for fornication*" clause in which God permitted divorce (Mt 5:32; 19:9).
 - b) The reason Matthew recorded this clause for the Jews was that the Jewish betrothal could only be broken by a divorce. Jesus permitted divorce for fornication only during engagement.
- 2) Because Joseph truly loved Mary, he was minded to put her away (i.e., divorce her) privately (v.19).

✞ *Though we live in an age when sexual activity outside marriage is commonplace, that does not make it right. Right and wrong are not relative. Right and wrong are absolutes set forth in the Word of God. If you want God's blessings on your life, then obey His Word not your feelings.*

His second response to the incarnation of Christ was ...

2. Joseph was Devoted (v.20-25; Lu 2:1-5)

a. His devotion to God changed his heart.

- 1) God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream who confirmed that Mary's conception was divine (v.20).

✞ *Now that we have the completed Bible, God no longer uses dreams or visions to reveal His Word.*

- 2) Note the angel's words.
 - a) *Joseph* (God knew him by name), *thou son of David* (he addressed him as from Israel's royal lineage), *fear*

not to take unto thee Mary thy wife (he must not fear the public shame and formalise his marriage to Mary his wife).

- b) The angels assured him *for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost* (Holy Spirit).
 - c) Mary would have a son (v.21). Joseph was to call his name *Jesus*. When God took on human flesh, He took the name *Jesus* which means Jehovah is Salvation. As the angel promised, He would *save his people from their sins*.
 - d) The angel went on to explain that Mary's supernatural conception was to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy 700 years earlier (v.22-23).
 - e) Another name of Christ was *Emmanuel*, which means God with us.
- 3) When Joseph heard that Mary's conception was divine and that she was the mother of the promised Messiah, Emmanuel, Jesus, who would save his people from their sins, he had a total change of heart.

b. His devotion to God changed his plans.

- 1) When Joseph awoke from his sleep, he made immediate arrangements to finalise his marriage with Mary (v.24).
- 2) He endured the shame of taking a wife who was pregnant before marriage and he lovingly cared for Mary (Luke 2:1-7).
- 3) God gave him special grace and *he knew her not sexually till she brought forth her firstborn son* (v.25). She was a virgin until Jesus was born. After that, she was no virgin. She gave birth to at least four other boys and two girls (Mt 13:55-56).
- 4) Obediently, Joseph named him Jesus.

His third response to the incarnation of Christ was ...

3. Joseph was Dutiful (Mt 2:13-23)

God send a miracle star to announce the birth of Christ and wise men from the East, (perhaps they were Jews who had remained in Babylon after the captivity), followed that start to Jerusalem looking for the newborn King, the Messiah. King Herod